

## **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest – 2005**

### **Third Prize: Karly Birch, Redmond Junior High**

United We Stand with the Help of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Civil Rights Movement, a movement to create everyone as equal, a movement that would go down in history as what I think to be the best thing that has ever happened to our country, all thanks to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I could never imagine what it would be like to live in the shoes of an African American in the 1950s and 60s. I am truly ashamed of how white people treated African Americans even though everyone is created equal; the only thing that separates us is the color of our skin, but I don't think that white people realized that back then. Without Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s accomplishments, no one knows what life would be like for both whites and black; but I am sure that we would never be united as one nation like we are today.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born into a segregated world but he was able to change the way of life for not only African Americans, but also people of all different cultural heritage; one person changing millions of lives is something that is unimaginable for me to even consider. While whites thought that they were the supreme beings, Martin Luther King Jr. knew otherwise. He believed that everyone, no matter what the color of his or her skin, should be treated equally. All blacks and whites had separate hospitals, separate drinking fountains, and even had separate schools. When Martin Luther King Jr. started elementary school he had to stop playing with his white friends and went to a school, which was like a pile of dirt, compare to the white kid's school, which was like gold. I cannot even envision what it would be like to attend an all white school and grow up thinking that discriminating against different races was okay. Back then, nothing was equal for blacks and whites, and children were punished for playing with kids of a different race even though they did not know that was frowned upon. When Martin Luther King Jr. was young he realized that white people thought that blacks were not as good as they were and he knew that had to change.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the most famous civil rights leaders in America. He is noted for things such as becoming the President of a group called the Montgomery Improvement Association, which helped lead blacks into boycotting busses after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man. On December 21st, 1956, three hundred and eight-two days after the boycott began, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and others sat in the front seats of a bus as they rode downtown and the whole country knew about it but no one stopped them. This affects me because every morning when I ride the bus to school, I sit among kids of all different ethnicities and I don't even become aware of the color of their skin because I know we are all equal. Even though Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was put into jail in many states throughout the South, he never took his mind off the thought of freedom for blacks and bringing the United States together as an equal country. He was torn apart by the fact that he could not explain to his own children why white people treated colored people so terribly. That is when he began to realize that the Civil Rights Movement needed to be put into action at that very

moment because blacks had waited more than 300 years for justice and now was as good a time as ever to have segregation come to an end; it was time for peace between blacks and whites.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought discrimination against blacks. He also believed in one general thing: peace. Peace was the topic of his unforgettable "I Have a Dream" speech delivered on the steps at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. on August 28th, 1963. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judge by the color of their skin but by the content of their character". This statement leads me to believe that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wanted every single person in the world to be equal and to be united for the common good. The common good was reaching the point where anyone, no matter the color of their skin or cultural heritage, could work together for one cause that could benefit others. I am sure that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would be proud to see that today people are still working together in keeping his dream alive, such as the students at my school.

When I think of uniting for the common good I can think of countless times when my school has come together to do one amazing thing for others. For instance, earlier this year, when the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina struck, my school decided to put together a fundraiser to help the survivors. We put a jar in the office for donations and every day my heart filled with delight as the jar became packed with donations. Students scraped up all the money they could and in the end my school raised over ten thousand dollars. When I reflect back on this, I realize that my school became united for the common good because everyone came together, worked together, and helped people of all races that were affected by the hurricane.

When I think of an inspiration, a role model, or one person who stands out among all the rest, I think of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was someone who cared about the rights of others and he has done things that have changed the world forever. He wanted to do something that seemed impossible, yet he achieved his dream; he had a vision that everyone in the United States would become equal. From doing things such as winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and giving his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is my role model and he made the United States stand together, and become united for the common good.

#### Bibliography

Levine, Ellen. If You Live at the Time of Martin Luther King. New Your: Scholastic, 1990